



Arlington Human Rights Commission Minutes

Date: Wednesday, April 21, 2021

Time: 8:00 PM- 10:00 PM

Location: Conducted by Remote Participation

Notice to the Public on meeting privacy In the interests of preventing abuse of videoconferencing technology (i.e. Zoom Bombing) all participants, including members of the public, wishing to engage via the Zoom App must register for each meeting and will notice multi-step authentication protocols. Please allow additional time to join the meeting. Further, members of the public who wish to participate without providing their name may still do so by registering to receive the meeting info and using the telephone dial-in information provided. Please read Governor Baker's Executive Order Suspending Certain Provision of Open Meeting Law for more information regarding virtual public hearings and meetings: <https://www.mass.gov/doc/open-meeting-law-order-march-12-2020/download>

Attendees: Co-Chairs Pusey and Jolin, Commissioners Rogers, Haynes, Grossman, Soneja, Brown, Bauer, Minton, Horowitz, Carey

Absent: Commissioner Carney

DEI Office: Jillian Harvey, Christina Coleman

Interns: Annika Benn, Tessa Erbe

Community Members: Laura Kiesel, Christina Harrison, Rebecca Gruber

Meeting called to order at 8:00 pm by Co-Chair Jolin

Land acknowledgement by Co-Chair Pusey

1. Review of Minutes
 - a. Amend section 6a to read "counsel"
 - b. *Motion to approve minutes as amended* by Commissioner Bauer and seconded by Commissioner Minton, *passed with unanimous approval*.
2. Review of Community Input from March 2021 meeting - No updates
3. Co-chair Report
 - a. Co-Chairs met with chief of police to discuss Everything is Free Arlington, MA Facebook group and Walgreens incidents.
 - b. Discussed Commission budgets in DEI Co-Chairs meeting – all commissions are looking for ways to use their allocated budgets to best serve the community.

- c. Commissioner Baron has resigned from the Commission and an announcement regarding her resignation was posted to Facebook and the AHRC website.
- 4. Commissioner Conduct and Endorsements
 - a. Most recent election cycle generated questions about how Commissioners conduct and endorse political legislation and parties
 - i. Doug Heim (Town Counsel) affirmed the parameters of AHRC political endorsement and personal endorsement by commissioners and pointed to the State Ethics Commission Advisory document.
 - b. Commission discussed limits on when to take political action
 - i. Commission discussed creating resources that clearly state:
 - 1. Commissioner limitations
 - 2. Standards for removal of Commissioners
 - 3. In designing both these resources, the AHRC will investigate if other towns have this documented.
- 5. Working Group Q&A - No updates
- 6. DEI Division Updates
 - a. 'Elevating Voices of Color' event is interested in a co-sponsorship from AHRC of approximately \$400.
 - b. YW Stand Against Racism Campaign to facilitate discussions about race within different town departments.
 - c. The National League of Cities training continues, focusing on learning about racial equity tools and how to apply them to their work.
 - d. Creation of Equity Action Plan (EAP) has been paused in order to collect new data.
 - e. Community Conversations are returning, with the first one marking the end of EcoWeek. The event will be in partnership with Parker McMullen Bushman to focus on environmental inclusivity.
 - f. An event on the Fair Housing Plan is being constructed for later this year
 - g. Next installment of Elevating Arlington is being planned, more artist talks and workshops will begin in June.
 - h. Arlington's DEI office is collaborating with surrounding towns (Beverly, Medford, Framingham, Westwood, Andover, Malden, Amherst, etc.) to create a Massachusetts DEI Coalition.
- 7. Budget Discussion
 - a. Lawn sign operations
 - i. Commission will designate pickup locations and times for people to get signs.
 - b. AHRC has \$3300 left in this year's budget – must be spent by June
 - i. Original budget breakdown:
 - 1. \$5000 dedicated to events, programs, speakers
 - 2. \$500 for supplies and marketing
 - 3. \$350 for co-sponsorships
 - 4. \$250 in miscellaneous funds
 - 5. \$1400 for the technology
 - c. *Motion to reallocate money for this year and dedicate up to \$1000 on Black History Month bookmarks, up to \$350 on co-sponsorships, and to have the*

Events Working Group responsible for allocating the remaining money (up to \$1950) by Commissioner Bauer, seconded by Commissioner Carey, passed with unanimous approval.

8. Statements

- a. Intersection of Hate and Gun Violence
 - i. Commissioner Bauer proposes that AHRC raises awareness about the recent MA Extreme Risk Protection Order (ERPO) through programming with the town and/or schools. AHRC can also encourage the Town to allow Gun Safety organizations to have a table at Town Day or other public events, encourage the Arlington library to promote awareness of gun violence, encourage the Safe Storage of Firearms in Arlington, and promote through the AHRC in newsletters.
 - ii. Ad hoc working group will write a newsletter piece on this topic and take other steps
- b. ACAC banners
 - i. ACAC hosted a youth art competition with the theme of Protest: Lifting Voices.
 - 1. One of the accepted banners depicts an officer with a can of tear gas and black female protester which sparked controversy in the community.
 - 2. Town Manager, Assistant Superintendent, and a Select Board member had discussions about the importance of not removing this banner.
 - ii. AHRC has decided not to make a statement in reaction to the controversy over the protest banner, as the situation appears to be resolved.

9. Community Input

- a. Laura Kiesel:
 - i. Introduced two affordable housing warrants for Town Meeting. Article 21 and 45: Both support increasing accessibility and amount of affordable housing to make it equitable for all residents. Current laws don't fully support residents in need of affordable housing.
 - 1. [Article 21](#): seeks to set aside a majority percentage of municipal funds allocated for affordable housing for those households/individuals making at or under 60% area median income.
 - 2. [Article 45](#): Amend Section 8.23A of the Zoning Bylaw to increase the percentage of affordable housing units required from 15% to a percentage between 25 and 30%.

10. Incidents

- a. Commissioner of the Month Update
 - i. Commissioner Horowitz reports an incident where a mother at a soccer game next to the Arlington Recreation Department found racially insensitive graffiti on a Porta Potty and filed a police report.
- b. Everything is Free Arlington, MA Incident

- i. Police were called to the home of a member of the Everything is Free Arlington Facebook group, and a woman of color on suspicion of stolen packages.
 - ii. An APD officer spoke with the woman at her residence.
 - iii. A FB post was made expressing the woman's concern with the interaction with APD.
 - iv. The police chief wrote a letter explaining details of the case to the Facebook group.
 - v. This incident introduced debate over whether the police presence at AHRC's monthly meetings is creating a safe environment for community members to voice their issues.
 - 1. Commissioner Carey attempted to invoke AHRC's policy to remove police presence for April's meeting, however there was confusion on the execution of this policy.
 - 2. The discussion of police presence was tabled until May's meeting and the policy will be revisited.
- c. Walgreens incident
 - i. A man used a racially charged remark ("Thanks for COVID-19") towards a woman of Asian descent in a Walgreens in Arlington.
 - 1. Later a Facebook comment was made by a separate individual claiming they had a similar encounter in that area, but the offender has not been identified for either incident.
- d. Social media reports
 - i. This topic was tabled until May due to time.

11. Warrant Article discussion and endorsements

- a. Multiple warrant articles were discussed and considered for endorsement.
 - i. *Motion to not endorse specific articles but rather write a letter to Town Meeting Members encouraging consideration of human rights when evaluating warrant articles* by Commissioner Horowitz, seconded by Commissioner Haynes, *passed with unanimous approval*

12. Announcements

- a. April Coffee Chat Update – Commissioners Soneja and Horowitz
 - i. No attendees registered
- b. Ethics Training Complete!
- c. May Incident Handling – Commissioner Jolin
- d. Coffee Chat – Commissioners Jolin and Haynes
 - i. Co-Chair Pusey sent commissioners an email to sign up for the next round of coffee chats (Juy – Dec)
- e. MAHRC – Commissioner Bauer
 - i. The statewide MAHRC focused this month on how statements are made and how Open Meeting laws are met in the process.
 - 1. Easton, Northampton, Belmont, and Barnstable shared their statements regarding Atlanta, as Commissioner Bauer did for Arlington.
- f. Chief's Advisory Council – Commissioner Grossman
 - i. Chief Flaherty gave background on who is in the APD, and what the purpose of the group is, such as receiving feedback on improvements and working on outreach.

- ii. Chief Flaherty discussed moving forward on body cams, police reform and her support of it.
- g. Civilian Review Board Exploratory Committee – Commissioner Rogers
 - i. The Civilian Review Board Study Committee has met twice and is trying to build their “infrastructure.”
 - ii. Commissioner Rogers is currently working as part of the “benchmarking/research” group.

Motion to adjourn by Commissioner Rogers, seconded by Commissioner Brown, *passed with unanimous approval.*